

# Those Winter Sundays

by Robert Hayden

Sundays too my father got up early  
and put his clothes on in the blueblack cold,  
then with cracked hands that ached  
from labor in the weekday weather made  
banked fires blaze. No one ever thanked him.

I'd wake and hear the cold splintering, breaking.  
When the rooms were warm, he'd call,  
and slowly I would rise and dress,  
fearing the chronic angers of that house,

Speaking indifferently to him,  
who had driven out the cold  
and polished my good shoes as well.  
What did I know, what did I know  
of love's austere and lonely offices?

# *In the Desert*

BY STEPHEN CRANE

In the desert

I saw a creature, naked, bestial,  
Who, squatting upon the ground,  
Held his heart in his hands,  
And ate of it.

I said, "Is it good, friend?"

"It is bitter—bitter," he answered;

"But I like it

"Because it is bitter,

"And because it is my heart."

# The Kraken

by Lord Alfred Tennyson

Below the thunders of the upper deep,  
Far, far beneath in the abysmal sea,  
His ancient, dreamless, uninvaded sleep  
The Kraken sleepeth: faintest sunlights flee  
About his shadowy sides; above him swell  
Huge sponges of millennial growth and height;  
And far away into the sickly light,  
From many a wondrous grot and secret cell  
Unnumbered and enormous polypi  
Winnow with giant arms the slumbering green.  
There hath he lain for ages, and will lie  
Battening upon huge sea worms in his sleep,  
Until the latter fire shall heat the deep;  
Then once by man and angels to be seen,  
In roaring he shall rise and on the surface die.

# I, Too

BY LANGSTON HUGHES

I, too, sing America.

I am the darker brother.  
They send me to eat in the kitchen  
When company comes,  
But I laugh,  
And eat well,  
And grow strong.

Tomorrow,  
I'll be at the table  
When company comes.  
Nobody'll dare  
Say to me,  
"Eat in the kitchen,"  
Then.

Besides,  
They'll see how beautiful I am  
And be ashamed—

I, too, am America.

# Introduction to Poetry

BY BILLY COLLINS

I ask them to take a poem  
and hold it up to the light  
like a color slide

or press an ear against its hive.

I say drop a mouse into a poem  
and watch him probe his way out,

or walk inside the poem's room  
and feel the walls for a light switch.

I want them to waterski  
across the surface of a poem  
waving at the author's name on the shore.

But all they want to do  
is tie the poem to a chair with rope  
and torture a confession out of it.

They begin beating it with a hose  
to find out what it really means.

# ***The Word Plum***

by Helen Chasin

The word *plum* is delicious

pout and push, luxury of  
self-love, and savoring murmur  
full in the mouth and falling  
like fruit

taut skin  
pierced, bitten, provoked into  
juice, and tart flesh

question  
and reply, lip and tongue  
of pleasure.

# Dusting

by Julia Alvarez

Each morning I wrote my name  
on the dusty cabinet, then crossed  
the dining room table in script, scrawled  
in capitals on the backs of chairs,  
practicing signatures like scales  
while Mother followed, squirting  
linseed from a burping can  
into a crumpled-up flannel.  
She erased my fingerprints  
from the bookshelf and rocker,  
polished mirrors on the desk  
scribbled with my alphabets.  
My name was swallowed in the towel  
with which she jeweled the table tops.  
The grain surfaced in the oak  
and the pine grew luminous.  
But I refused with every mark  
to be like her, anonymous

# **Because I could not stop for death**

by Emily Dickinson

Because I could not stop for Death –  
He kindly stopped for me –  
The Carriage held but just Ourselves –  
And Immortality.

We slowly drove – He knew no haste  
And I had put away  
My labor and my leisure too,  
For His Civility –

We passed the School, where Children strove  
At Recess – in the Ring –  
We passed the Fields of Gazing Grain –  
We passed the Setting Sun –

Or rather – He passed Us –  
The Dews drew quivering and Chill –  
For only Gossamer, my Gown –  
My Tippet – only Tulle –

We paused before a House that seemed  
A Swelling of the Ground –  
The Roof was scarcely visible –  
The Cornice – in the Ground –

Since then – 'tis Centuries – and yet  
Feels shorter than the Day  
I first surmised the Horses' Heads  
Were toward Eternity –



# *Promises Like Pie-Crust*

by Christina Georgina Rosetti

Promise me no promises,  
So will I not promise you:  
Keep we both our liberties,  
Never false and never true:  
Let us hold the die uncast,  
Free to come as free to go:  
For I cannot know your past,  
And of mine what can you know?

You, so warm, may once have been  
Warmer towards another one:  
I, so cold, may once have seen  
Sunlight, once have felt the sun:  
Who shall show us if it was  
Thus indeed in time of old?  
Fades the image from the glass,  
And the fortune is not told.

If you promised, you might grieve  
For lost liberty again:  
If I promised, I believe  
I should fret to break the chain.  
Let us be the friends we were,  
Nothing more but nothing less:  
Many thrive on frugal fare  
Who would perish of excess.

# Caged Bird

BY MAYA ANGELOU

A free bird leaps  
on the back of the wind  
and floats downstream  
till the current ends  
and dips his wing  
in the orange sun rays  
and dares to claim the sky.

But a bird that stalks  
down his narrow cage  
can seldom see through  
his bars of rage  
his wings are clipped and  
his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.

The free bird thinks of another breeze  
and the trade winds soft through the sighing trees  
and the fat worms waiting on a dawn bright lawn  
and he names the sky his own

But a caged bird stands on the grave of dreams  
his shadow shouts on a nightmare scream  
his wings are clipped and his feet are tied  
so he opens his throat to sing.

The caged bird sings  
with a fearful trill  
of things unknown  
but longed for still  
and his tune is heard  
on the distant hill  
for the caged bird  
sings of freedom.